

Breaking Down the

BARRIERS

December 2008

Accessible Transportation in Drumheller

In July 1984, the Valley Bus Society, a non-profit agency, was formed after local charities purchased a handi-bus and donated it to the Municipality of Drumheller. Drumheller subsequently contracted the Valley Bus Society to operate a transportation service for seniors and persons with disabilities.



The transportation service is available to any individual who is unable to use public transportation with dignity or without assistance, and to all persons over 50.

Responding to the demand for accessible transportation services, the Valley Bus Society has expanded to comprise a fleet of four vehicles. Currently, the fleet consists of a 19- and a 16-passenger bus, as well as a seven-passenger van. All three of them are wheelchair accessible. Also included in the fleet is a seven-passenger van, which does not have a wheelchair lift. Arriving this fall will be a new 18-passenger bus and nine-passenger van, both of which will be wheelchair accessible.

The Valley Bus Society offers passengers a variety of services such as regular scheduled routes, (for school and shopping), a demand responsive service (Dial A Bus), and charters (for medical and recreational purposes). Fees vary from \$2.50 to \$12.50 depending on destination. Attendants ride at no charge.

Vans can be chartered out at \$50.00/hour and buses at \$75.00/hour. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., and Saturdays by appointment only. There is no service on Sundays and holidays.

In 2007, the Valley Bus Society, which serves more than 200 clients, not only performed more than 23,500 scheduled trips and Dial A Bus calls in Drumheller and the surrounding area, but also provided a total of 232 charter trips.

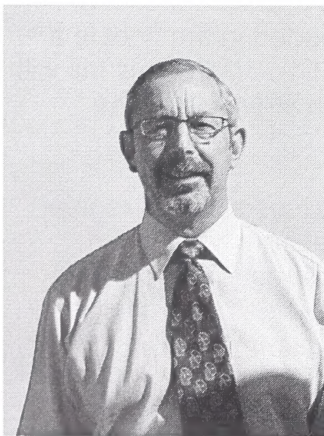
The Valley Bus Society has received funding through local donations, municipal grants, the David Thompson Health Region, the Alberta Lottery Fund, and provincial grants. The volunteer Board of Directors consists of nine people. The only paid employees are the Coordinator/Dispatcher, two full-time drivers, and four part-time drivers.

This article has been submitted by Joanne Coté,
Coordinator/Dispatcher, Valley Bus Society

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**Profile: George Penny, General Manager,
Calgary HandiBus Association**



1. How did you become interested in transportation issues?

I have always had an interest in transportation. I started my career as a mechanic, became a motor vehicle engineer in the British Army, then moved to Canada and managed Calgary Transit's fleet of buses and was Director of Maintenance for Rocky Mountaineer Vacations. Most recently, I have taken over as General Manager/CEO of Calgary HandiBus Association, where accessibility and availability of equipment to move Calgarians are some of our key issues.

2. What is your role on the Barrier Free Committee and why did you become involved?

I became involved with the Committee as part of the Calgary HandiBus Association. I recognized early on that working with the Committee is important if we are to expand barrier free transportation. As our City expands and our population ages, it is important that "social inclusion" be at the forefront of all of our expansion plans, whether they are transportation, sustainable communities or pedestrian links to allow everyone to enjoy and participate in community life.

3. What are the some of the major concerns or issues you have related to accessible transportation?

Accessible transportation is the key element in allowing everyone to enjoy everyday activities. As Calgary expands and grows we must be able to increase our fleet to meet those needs. Our operators are passionate about what they do. Like all transit and transportation companies, we are having difficulties filling positions. Recruiting the right people to join our team is a major concern facing all of us.

Breaking Down the Barriers Newsletter June 2008 Survey

Thank you to all of the readers who completed the survey included with the June 2008 newsletter. The survey received a good response from readers, with the results indicating that they are satisfied with the newsletter. This article provides highlights of the survey results, and outlines changes that will be made to the newsletter in response to the feedback we received from readers.

In total, 67 survey responses were received. With a mailing list of about 500, this represents a response rate of 13 per cent.

The results of the survey include:

- 91 per cent were satisfied with the newsletter;
- 81 per cent found the content of the newsletter useful;
- 94 per cent found the newsletter easy to read; and
- 60 per cent found information in the newsletter that they could not find anywhere else.

The survey also asked readers how they prefer to receive the newsletter. The respondent's answers are displayed below (the numbers do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding):

- 43 per cent prefer print;
- 3 per cent prefer large print
- 43 per cent prefer e-mail; and
- 12 per cent prefer Word.

The survey contained an error in that the choice 'Word' meant 'large print'.

Any readers who wish to receive the newsletter in e-mail format may request the change by contacting Debbie Jarrett, Alberta Transportation, by telephone at 780-427-0219 or or by e-mail at debbie.jarrett@gov.ab.ca.

When asked what they liked best about the newsletter, readers' most common responses were community profiles, personal travel stories, and information on funding sources.

The survey asked readers whether there were any articles that they would like to see included in future newsletters. The most common responses were information on funding sources, and personal travel stories. Other subjects included accessible service stations, recreation vehicle accessibility, flight traveling, rural focus, information on Southern Alberta, equipment, and aging in the community.

In response to the feedback received from its readers, Breaking Down the Barriers will begin featuring in each issue an article on an accessible transportation funding program. In this issue, an article on the Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Program is provided. We have also included a personal travel story from Larry Pempeit, Director of Community Development, Canadian Paraplegic Association. In future issues, every effort will be made to include articles on other subjects identified by readers.

For more information or to request this newsletter in a different format, please contact:

Don Hardy
Alberta Transportation
Phone: 780-422-3801
E-mail: donald.hardy@gov.ab.ca

Personal Travel Story: Larry and Charlie

Every day, Larry Pempeit and Charlie (Larry's service dog) ride public transit together. Like a seasoned traveler, Charlie snoozes at Larry's feet during bus rides.

When Larry decided this past summer to fly to San Francisco, he resolved to bring Charlie. After getting the required documentation, notifying the airlines, and getting a current veterinarian examination, he still expected to experience some problems in boarding the airplane and clearing customs. Larry was pleasantly surprised to find that the process went very smoothly.



To board with Charlie, Larry was required only to provide documentation proving that Charlie's vaccinations were current and that Charlie was a trained service dog. They both had a successful, enjoyable trip, with Charlie resting at Larry's feet for the duration of both flights. Larry plans to bring Charlie along on most of his future long-distance trips.

While researching flying with Charlie, Larry learned that if he was going to take a cruise, he would not experience difficulty in bringing Charlie on board. Most cruise ships accept service dogs.

Larry found out, however, that passengers might encounter problems in taking service dogs off the ship during the cruise. Cruise ships often dock at a variety of different countries, and some of these countries may restrict the entry of service dogs. Therefore, people who plan on taking a cruise ship that will dock in a number of foreign countries are advised to check in advance with appropriate authorities about each country's requirements for the entry of service dogs.

This article has been submitted by Larry Pempeit, Director of Community Development, Canadian Paraplegic Association

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Funding Profile: Community Spirit Program

Eligible non-profit organizations and charities registered under the Canada Revenue Agency that provide accessible transportation services stand to benefit from the Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Program.

The goal of this donor driven program is to increase Albertans' charitable giving to help support Alberta's non-profit and charitable organizations. The program is made of two components: an enhanced charitable tax credit and a new donation grant.

Under the donation grant, all eligible non-profit organizations and registered charities that have received at least \$1000 in eligible cash donations may apply for a donation grant from the Government of Alberta.

The donation grant can be used to offset transportation capital costs, such as the purchase of a new handi-van or the installation of a wheelchair lift onto a van. The operating costs of an accessible vehicle are also an eligible use of grant funds.

The donation grant is funded at \$20 million per year for each of the next three years. The application deadline is December 31, 2008. The maximum grant available is \$25,000 per year or \$50,000 over three years. For more information on the Community Spirit Program, please visit

culture.alberta.ca/communityspirit/default.aspx

For more information, please contact:

Community Spirit Program

Alberta Culture and Community Spirit

Phone: 780-644-8604 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000)

E-mail: **community.spirit@gov.ab.ca**

Medical Oxygen on Board Airplanes

On June 26, 2008, the Canadian Transportation Agency (the Agency) released its final decision on Air Canada's and Westjet's practices about the use of medical oxygen on their airplanes. This decision follows a public hearing the Agency conducted in 2007 to investigate complaints about these airlines' oxygen practices.

In its decision, the Agency ordered Air Canada to undertake several corrective measures. These include:



- Providing oxygen to passengers prior to boarding, during the flight, during flight connections, and until they arrive in the general public area at their final destination;
- Providing humidifiers to passengers who have a medically documented need for them;
- Offering oxygen service free of charge on the airplane and within terminals, except for fees related to the cost of the oxygen itself and certain non-reusable equipment; and
- Modifying its Fitness for Travel form to ask only for information on a passenger's oxygen related needs.

The Agency had received complaints about Westjet's policy of prohibiting passengers from using their own oxygen on international flights. Since Westjet has subsequently changed its policy to allow passenger supplied oxygen on all of its flights, the Agency has determined that no further action is required of the airline.

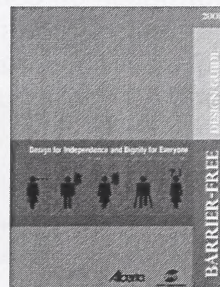
A news release summarizing the Agency's decision is available at
www.cta-otc.gc.ca/media/communiquel/2008/080626_e.html

For more information, please contact:
Canadian Transportation Agency
Phone: 888-222-2592
TTY: 800-669-5575
E-mail: **info@cta-otc.gc.ca**



Barrier-Free Design Guide

In September 2008, the Safety Codes Council posted a new edition of the Barrier-Free Design Guide on its website (**www.safetycodes.ab.ca**). The Barrier-Free Design Guide explains the intent of the barrier free requirements of the Alberta Building Code, and provides recommendations on how developers can meet or exceed these barrier free requirements.



In the area of parking, the new Guide suggests that in facilities, such as hospitals, used by a larger number of seniors and persons with disabilities, an additional number of designated stalls be considered.

The new Guide also recommends that, where possible, a single stall should be four meters wide. This larger size is more appropriate for wheelchair transfers. When two or more designated stalls are together, these stalls may be 3.7 meters wide provided that an access aisle of 1.5 meters is located between the stalls to allow for a wheelchair transfer.

Another addition in the new Guide is a signage standard for designated stalls. According to this standard, designated stalls are to contain both a sign mounted on a pole and the International Symbol of Access (wheelchair logo) painted on the pavement.

The Barrier-Free Design Guide is available for download at
www.safetycodes.ab.ca/upload/docs/SCC-BFDG-FINAL-protected.pdf

For more information, please contact:

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**DID
YOU
KNOW**

Alberta Inter-community Public Transportation Guide Updated

In October 2008, Alberta Transportation updated the Alberta Inter-community Public Transportation Guide. This Guide is designed to assist people in making trips between Alberta communities. The Guide provides information on communities with accessible transportation services, contact information, hours of operation, and service requirements. The Guide also lists accessible bus, rail and air carriers, and contains a map of accessible rest stops along Alberta's highways. The Guide can be found at:

www.transportation.alberta.ca/pol040.htm

Accessibility for Passengers at Calgary International Airport

Calgary International Airport is equipped with accessible features to provide all passengers, greeters, and airport staff with a means to travel around the airport. These accessible features include:

- Bright, hard floor surfaces with almost no carpet. Floor stanchions are used for guidance around the airport;
- Accessible elevators containing Braille inscriptions, tactile signage, large doors, and lowered control panels;
- Signage with large fonts and bright contrasting colors;
- Large, private accessible washrooms for travelers with disabilities. These accessible washrooms, equipped with lower dispensers and grab bars, are available to adults requiring assistance as well as to parents traveling with young children;
- Accessible phones in the main terminal and every concourse;
- Teletypewriter phones for persons with hearing impairments;
- Special areas for service dogs; and
- Accessible public transportation (www.calgarytransit.com).



Airport staff and volunteers - identifiable by their white hats - are available to assist travelers with disabilities.

In 2009, the new International Facilities Project, which will include an entirely new concourse, will be underway. Calgary International Airport will consult with stakeholders to ensure that all airport facilities remain accessible and meet the current and future needs of all passengers regardless of ability.

This article has been submitted by Andrea Terpstra, Calgary International Airport.

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DID YOU KNOW

Alberta Transportation to Work with Alberta Municipal Affairs on Designated Parking

In 2006, Alberta Transportation wrote to the Safety Codes Council, recommending changes to the Alberta Building Code requirements regarding designated parking.

Alberta Transportation recommended changes in the following areas:

- The number of designated parking stalls;
- The location of designated parking stalls;
- The size of designated parking stalls;
- Loading zones in parking lots; and
- Signage of designated parking stalls.

The recommendations have since gone to the Safety Services branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs because they are responsible for the development of the regulations for the Alberta Building Code, while the Safety Codes Council recommends the final Building Code standards to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Recent data on the extent to which parking placard holders use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids support the need to update the regulations regarding the size and number of designated parking stalls within the Alberta Building Code. Alberta Transportation will work in collaboration with Safety Services to determine the new standards for the number of and size of designated parking stalls.

For more information, please contact:

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Rocky View Regional Handibus Society Survey

In September 2003, Rocky View Regional Handibus Society circulated a survey to 60 special needs transportation providers operating in rural and small town Alberta. Some 35 organizations responded to provide a "snapshot" of Alberta's small transportation organizations. While most respondents were handibus/handivan organizations, taxi programs and volunteer driver programs also responded.

The results suggested that many Alberta communities shared the same frustrations: need for better funding, old equipment that must be replaced, and a need for training. Despite the concerns, it was impressive to find that Alberta's smaller communities provided some 250,000 trips per year.

Rocky View Regional Handibus will be revisiting the survey in mid-September 2008. We intend to ask the same questions as the 2003 survey. We also want to ask another 15 short questions about collaborations, revenue sources and interest in a provincial association. The survey will be available on the website of Rocky View Handibus Society (www.rockyviewbus.ca).

The results of Rocky View Regional Handibus' earlier 2003 and new 2008 survey will compliment the work already conducted by Alberta Transportation in 2005 on specialized transportation services available to the public. Alberta Transportation completed the ***Transportation for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities in Alberta: A Survey Analysis of Results***, which found that:

- 79 per cent of Albertans reside in a community where specialized transportation services are available;
- Close to 50,000 Albertans are registered for specialized transportation services; and
- There are a range of specialized transportation services across Alberta. The service providers differ in terms of size, structure, staffing patterns, services provided as well as equipment options and funding sources.

The complete survey is available on Alberta Transportation's website at www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType55/Production/invstudyreport.pdf

A listing of accessible transportation services available in Alberta can be found on Alberta Transportation's Inter-community Public Transportation Guide at: www.transportation.alberta.ca/pol040.htm

For more information on the Rocky View Regional Handibus Society survey, please contact:

Paul Siller

Rocky View Handibus Society

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Woodlands County's Accessible Transportation Grant

To enhance the quality of life for seniors and persons with disabilities living in Woodlands County, the County has created a grant - entitled the Senior Citizens and Handicapped Persons Transportation Grant -that will assist seniors and persons with disabilities with their health related transportation costs. The Grant will reimburse health related transportation expenses at a rate of \$0.50 per kilometer to an annual maximum of \$300.

All health related transportation costs, such travel to the office of a physician, dentist, or chiropractor, are eligible expenses. Seniors and persons with disabilities who need to travel outside of Woodlands County for medical appointments can claim their transportation expenses under the Grant. Both public transit and private vehicles are acceptable modes of transportation.

According to the policy, a senior is someone aged 65 years or older. The policy defines a person with a disability as someone who holds parking placard or can produce a letter from their physician stating they have a disability. For further information, please contact:

Dean Bradford
Woodlands County
Phone: 888-870-6315
E-mail: dean.bradford@woodlands.ab.ca

Canadian Transportation Agency Makes Accessible Transportation Rulings

The Canadian Transportation Agency (the Agency) released a number of accessible transportation rulings:

- The Agency found that an air carrier's refusal to carry ten boxes of a passenger's dialysis solution in the cabin of its aircraft did not constitute an obstacle to the passenger's mobility. For more information, please visit:
www.cta-otc.gc.ca/rulings-decisions/decisions/2008/A/AT/222-AT-A-2008_e.html

- The Agency found that both the accessibility of the airport wheelchairs and the air carrier provided to a passenger and the air carrier's handling of the passenger's own wheelchair constituted obstacles to her mobility. For more information, please visit:
www.cta-otc.gc.ca/rulings-decisions/decisions/2008/A/AT/299-AT-A-2008_e.html
- The Agency dismissed a transit union's complaint that their municipality's failure to purchase and install an automated announcement system on buses caused an undue obstacle for persons with disabilities who use the municipal transit system. For more information, please visit:
www.cta-otc.gc.ca/rulings-decisions/decisions/2008/MV/AT/431-AT-MV-2008_e.html
- The Agency found that the amount of floor space two airlines provided for a passenger's service animal constituted an undue obstacle to that passenger's mobility. The Agency ordered the airlines to implement policies that will ensure that a person traveling with a service animal will be assigned seating with sufficient floor space at no additional cost. For more information, please visit:
www.cta-otc.gc.ca/rulings-decisions/decisions/2008/A/AT/327-AT-A-2008_e.html

For more information, as well as access to other Agency rulings, please contact:

Canadian Transportation Agency

Phone: 888-222-2592

TTY: 800-669-5575

E-mail: info@cta-otc.gc.ca

Accessible Rest Rooms on Alberta's Highways

Travelers on Alberta's provincial highways will soon have 35 new accessible rest rooms to use when they stop at 28 highway rest areas (please see map on page 14).

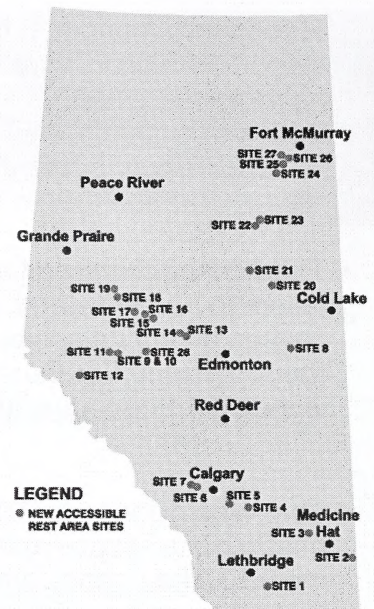
The rest rooms, which replace porta-potties at some rest areas, will be permanent facilities equipped with light and heat, but will not contain running water or flush facilities. The interiors will be large enough for persons using wheelchairs to enter and turn around.

To assist persons with visual impairments, the door exteriors will contain Braille signage. All washrooms will be gender neutral and large enough to accommodate two people, thus assisting individuals who travel with an attendant. Security lighting is also being added to rest areas presently without any lighting.

Currently, 11 highway rest areas are equipped with accessible rest rooms.

For more information, please contact:

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A Toolkit of Resources for Municipalities and Other Interested Stakeholders on Parking Placards for Persons with Disabilities

Alberta Transportation and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation have developed a new educational resource on parking placards. Entitled **Resources for Municipalities and Other Interested Stakeholders on Parking Placards for Persons with Disabilities: a Toolkit**, this resource provides information to assist municipalities and other stakeholders, such as building owners, on parking placard enforcement and education.

The Toolkit provides background information on parking placards and designated stalls, and suggests means by which municipalities can raise awareness of parking placards and designated stalls. To assist municipalities that are developing bylaws on designated stalls, the Toolkit contains a discussion of the bylaws of seven Alberta municipalities, and includes the text of each of these bylaws.

Public building owners have inquired about how many designated stalls they are required to provide. To assist these owners, the Toolkit contains a detailed discussion about the Alberta Building Code's requirements for the number and size of designated stalls. The Barrier-Free Design Guide, which provides recommendations on how developers can meet or exceed the accessibility requirements of the Alberta Building Code, was updated in October 2008.

The Toolkit contains a discussion on the Barrier-Free Design Guide's recommendations for designated stalls.



The Toolkit also provides information and some examples on what constitutes abuse of parking placards and designated stalls. Many concerned individuals have asked about the procedures for reporting abuse of parking placards and designated stalls. The Toolkit explains how to report abuse to the organizations responsible for enforcing municipal bylaws governing designated stalls. Examples of organizations that enforce their municipality's bylaws governing designated stalls within specified municipal boundaries include the Calgary Parking Authority, the City of Edmonton Parking Enforcement, Lethbridge's Regional Police Service, and the City of Red Deer Bylaw Enforcement.

The Toolkit can be viewed on Alberta Transportation's website:

www.transportation.alberta.ca

For more information, please contact:

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E-mail: **donald.hardy@gov.ab.ca**

Updated Resources for Providers of Accessible Transportation Services: A Toolkit

Alberta Transportation has updated its publication, ***Resources for Providers of Accessible Transportation Services: A Toolkit***, adding information that will assist accessible transportation providers. These additions include:

- Municipal transit studies;
- Examples of community best practices; and
- Information on accessible building grants.

The Toolkit can be viewed on Alberta Transportation's website at:

www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType55/Production/resacctranprov.pdf

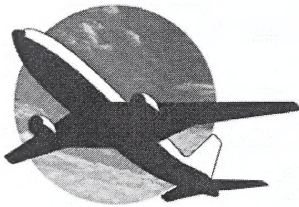


If you know of any other examples of strategic planning guides, regional coordination plans, or any other resources useful for providers of accessible transportation, please contact Alberta Transportation.

For more information, please contact:

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Editorial Board

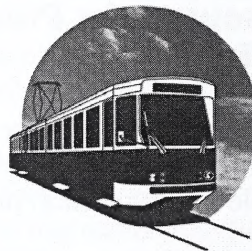


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